

Missing in Action

Nellie was overwhelmed.

"Nellie took off. I put out a missing person (report) on her and 3 months later she was found in Los Angeles with one of her friends; Betty, (who) was also married."

(Personal Input)

I had wondered why Bob and Nellie went to live in Trinidad, since there was so much friction between them and Bob's parents. This story made sense in that once the kids were given to Bob's parents; and Nellie went missing; the Colorado State Welfare Department was notified. Gertrude was very familiar with Child Welfare Services. She had been a ward of the state when she was a young child.

Once the state opened a file on Nellie Vallejos, the kids were on their radar. Bob didn't want them in Trinidad, but he had no choice. He had to find Nellie and try to convince her to come back to the role of wife and mother.

(End Input)

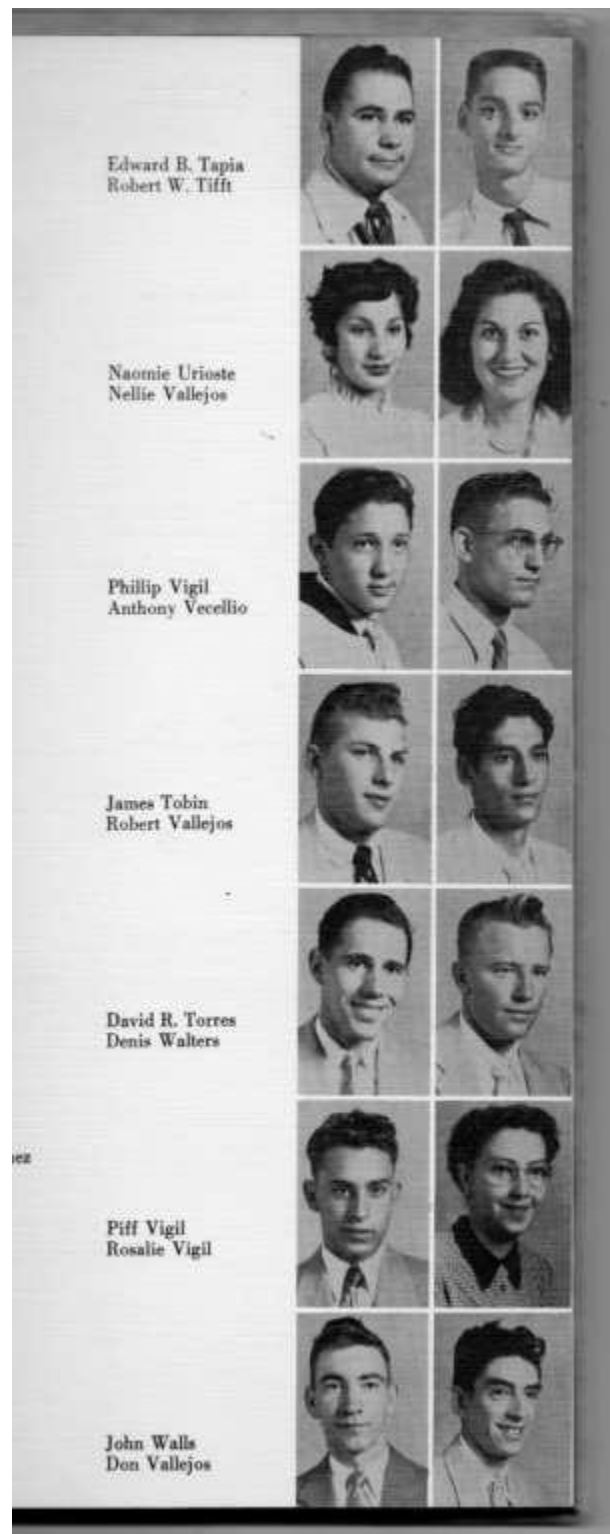
Bob went to Los Angeles to try and work things out with Nellie. He took a couple of jobs during 1954: General Motors in Van Nuys, and Sears and Roebuck on Whitter Blvd. in Los Angeles.

"And then in the later part of 1954 (we) went back to Trinidad. (We) had no choice, because I got a letter from the Welfare stating...I was supposed to pay around (\$500!) a month...just for 2 kids. I couldn't afford it. That was way more money than I was making, including my disability compensation, (from) being wounded in Korea."

So, Bob and Nellie moved to Trinidad, rented a small house and took Cathy and Robert back from Bob's parents. By 1955 both Nellie and Bob enrolled in Trinidad Junior College. Bob stayed only briefly...long enough to have class photos taken at least.

"Nellie tried so hard to be friendly with (my parents), before and after we were married. But it was no use. They humiliated her every chance they got. As a matter of fact, the minute I'd wind up in the hospital for some time, they would go (and fight with her.)"

Welfare records confirmed there were conflicts between the grandparents (Frank & Gertrude) and the children's mother (Nellie).



"The Shield" Yearbook 1955, Trinidad Jr. College

A bit of Frank and Gertrude's background will enlighten this conflict.

Frank met his future wife, Gertrude, through his sister Reyes. While harvesting beets in Nebraska, Frank and Reyes befriended Gertrude. Gertrude used to be the balloon lady at a local carnival. Frank was captivated by Gert's blue eyes. But Gertrude was married to an abusive man (Frank Hernandez), who locked her in their house when he went off to work. Reyes went to visit Gertrude, found her locked inside and broke out a window. Gertrude had two older daughters at the time, and elected to leave them behind, to get away from her angry husband. She and Frank ran off.



As Frank Vallejos and Gertrude escaped her unhappy home, they brought along her recent newborn daughter. This was 1929, and they were making the long journey in late Fall from Nebraska to Trinidad, CO. They were driving,

"... a screwed up Model T Ford...which in them days there was no such thing as a heater in (it)."

The eastern slope of the Colorado Rockies is prone to "up slope" weather conditions, that can change drastically in a matter of hours. While traveling south along the foothills, baby (Pablita) grew sick and died. She is purportedly buried in Greeley, CO.

Meanwhile, Frank Hernandez took his two girls to Mexico to be with his family. Robert's oldest daughter Cathy remembers visiting them in Mexico but didn't remember their names. (Years later, I had DNA contact through Ancestry.com from Carlos Navarro, a son of one of Gertrude's daughters. He confirmed their names as Leona and Elvira.)

(Personal Input)

I can only imagine the wagging tongues that surrounded Frank and his new lady friend, when they returned to Trinidad, in the late fall of 1929. Family had been told that Frank and Gertrude were married in the LDS church; (however I could find no proof). Another unsubstantiated rumor was that Frank killed his father, Adolfo. I did find a Trinidad phone listing for 1930 that listed Adolfo Vallejos (dec), but little else. By April of 1930 the census shows Frank and Gertrude living in the old cabin Adolfo built in Powder House Canyon. Trucking was the livelihood Frank engaged in at that time.

This next input goes straight to the question of Robert's real mother. Somebody was pregnant with Robert at the time the census was taken. Another rumor said that tio Diego brought baby Robert to Trinidad to be presented to the childless couple. There was no doubt Frank was the child's father, (DNA upheld that question). However, it's Robert's official birth certificate from the State of Colorado that created more questions than answers. If Gertrude was Robert's true mother, why didn't she get credit for him on the birth certificate? The child's mother is listed simply as "Mary". Franks name was there, prominently, and the only witness to the child's birth was Lee Gonzales. (The only 'Lee Gonzales' in Trinidad at that time was the school bus driver.)

Robert was born on 17 May 1931. He was baptized at the Holy Trinity Church in Trinidad on 14 Feb 1932. His parents are listed as Frank Vallejos and Gertrude Young. Fifteen days *later* the state registrar recorded Robert's birth for the state of Colorado.

Nevertheless, Robert was Gertrude's child to raise as she saw fit. 'Fit' being an appropriate description of baby Robert's demeanor. Gertrude told her granddaughter Cathy that her dad Robert, (as a baby) was quite a handful. Out of frustration baby Robert was hung outside on the clothesline to screech and wail.... until tio Diego came by one day and found the boy so cast. Diego put an end to that practice.

To put a finer point on this confusion, Frank and Gertrude did not get officially married until 1948; the same year their son runs off to the Army.

(End Input)

Gertrude Young was born 1 Jan 1905 in Kansas City, MO. Her upbringing was not a happy one. At a tender age she became a ward of the court, and found herself in an orphanage. It's unknown what became of her mother or father. By 1920; well before she was 15 years old, Gertrude is fostered into the family of Roy and Ella Shiner, who later adopted her.

I was unable to locate any marriage records for Gertrude and Frank Hernandez. Nor any reference to the two daughters she had with him.

Once free of her abusive husband, she and Frank Vallejos settled down to domestic life on the edge of Trinidad. This new little spit fire son, stifled any desire to have more children...at least for the next 8 years. Then by 1939 young Robert had competition; her name was Patty. She was the 'apple of their eye,' and grew into a stunning beauty.



Gertrude, Frank and Nellie's sister, Frances Vargas.

Gertrude had decided to become an official member of the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Trinidad during 1948. She was baptized on the 8th of May, married 12 June, and confirmed the 17th of October that year. Young Robert was inducted into the Army on 16 July 1948, having just turned 17 two months earlier.

The shock of their son running off to the Army, left Frank and Gertrude furious. They needed him back. He was an important asset for income. If they were to appeal to the government for his return, they would be drawing unwanted attention.

"My parents showed up (at Fort Ord) when I was training troops for Korea, and they demanded from my company commander, to release me from the military because I had no business being there, and that I was their son, and they needed help, my help. This had been going on from the day they found out I was in the military."

Robert's parents didn't get their wish until August 1952, when Robert was discharged from the Army. Gertrude, however, was about to be faced with a very familiar situation. A young mother, abandoning her children and running away. I noticed on the church records that Gertrude chose Saint Teresa to be her personal guide. The saint that protects one from headaches....

(Personal Input)

Robert's return to Trinidad and the subsequent arrival of more sons and daughters was the catalyst for many horrible memories in the minds of his children. They were neglected, abused, ridiculed and abandoned by a mentally and morally damaged father. Nellie took the brunt of her husband's abuse and PTSD rages.

When Robert's parents and Child Welfare stepped in, it was in the children's best interests. Still, they could never erase the chaos or abuse they endured.

(End Input)